

ARLINGTON STREET CHURCH CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

Mark David Buckles, conductor

INSTRUMENTALISTS

*Linli Wang, piano
Rachel Panitch, violin
Julie Metcalf, violin
Eve Boltax, viola
Valerie Thompson, cello
Laura Heinrichs, flute
Megan Riccio, horn*

SOPRANOS

*Elizabeth Foster
Eve Lauria
Gaby Whitehouse
Julie Gregorio
Karen Tausch
Tori Bell
Zoe Arguello*

ALTOS

*Betsy Shearer
Cecilia Nowell
Emily Jaworski
Jeanne Monaghan
Joanna Lubkin
Sharon Gentges
Zoë Onion*

TENORS

*Daniel Rosensweig
Reese Millican*

BASSES

*Dan Ivey
George Whitehouse
Jair Olivares
Jim Tice
Judah Leblang
Richard Marshall
Lawson Daves*



A generous bequest from H. Guild brought us today's Easter lilies. If you would like to take one home, Rev. Kim or Beth Robbins will gratefully receive your \$5 donation per plant (cash, check, or text GIVE to 617-300-0509). *Happy Easter!*

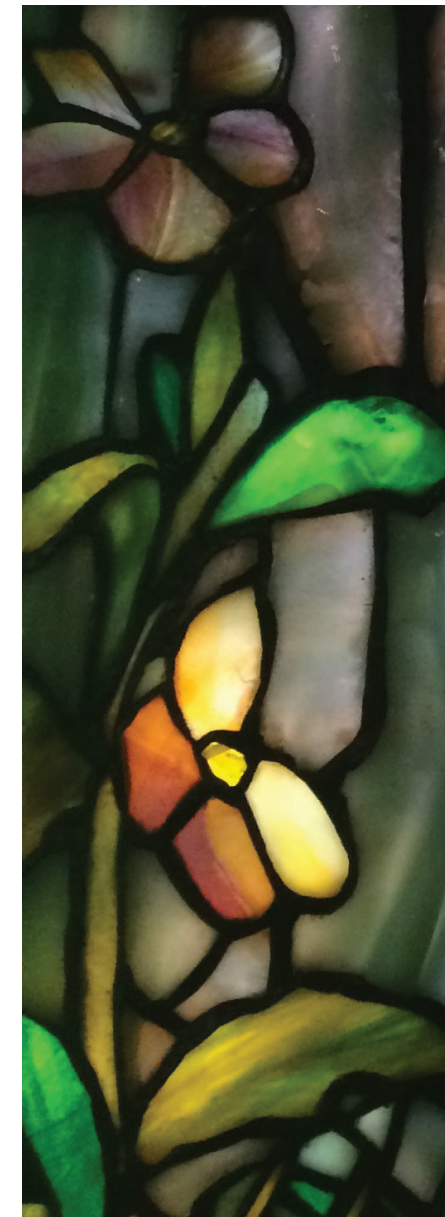


**ARLINGTON
STREET CHURCH**
Unitarian Universalist

SUNDAY, APRIL 16TH, 2017

KINDLING

SMALL REFLECTIONS ON A LIMITLESS FAITH



Arlington Street Church
Boston, Massachusetts
Founded in 1729

Gathered in love and service for justice and peace

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Arlington Street Church, Unitarian Universalist

SUNDAY, APRIL 16TH, 2017

KINDLING

Small Reflections on a Limitless Faith
text and music by Elizabeth Alexander

I. FIRST TOUCH

*Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder,
affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit
and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life*

The first touch brings astonishment, then delight:

Water, kitten belly, hydrangea blossom, warm mud.

New ears learn to decipher footsteps and music.

While watching a fuzzy caterpillar, small hearts lean towards God.

II. PAGES

*Words and deeds of prophetic women and men
which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil
with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love*

On the pages of the morning paper,

People rebuild shattered schools and restore lifeless lakes,

Knit reconciliation out of promise and pain,

And sing to the deathly ill and the newly born.

Constitutions are still being written,

And slaves freed and truces forge.

We finish our breakfasts and roll up our own sleeves.

III. CHOSEN PEOPLE

*Jewish and Christian teachings
which call us to respond to God's love
by loving our neighbors as ourselves*

As children we are enchanted by the apple, the ark, the whale,

The boy with the slingshot, the baby in the barn.

Later we grapple with forgiveness, resurrection and compassion.

Chosen people are everywhere now –

in the market, under the bridge,

The next chapters are our to imagine.

IV. SO MUCH RADIANCE

*Wisdom from the world's religions
which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life*

Once we set forth in the dark empty hours of the night,

In search of a Presence wondrous and unseen,

Guided only by a voice still and small.

Our outstretched hands soon encountered

The brass and grain of Cross and Menorah,

And our fingers traced their contours with reverence and joy.

Only now, as the rising sun illuminates

Wheel and Lotus, Yin and Yang,

Star and Crescent, Eagle and Drum,

We begin to behold the Limitless:

So much Radiance within our reach – even more beyond.

V. STRONG BRAID

*Humanist teachings
which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason
and the results of science,
and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit*

Aloft in the heady air of faith,

Our senses heightened by incense and ether,

We may from time to time become ecstatic paper kites.

We dive and keel and rocket,

Riding each wayward gust with abandon,

Recklessly aspiring to Auroral heights—

Yet knowing all the while that we are safe,

Tethered to the ground by a strong braid, a steady hand,

And a mind that appraises the wind.

VI. WHERE BELIEF BEGINS

*Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions
which celebrate the sacred circle of life
and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature*

It comes down to this, in the end.

And in the beginning and middle as well:

Earth, generous and visceral,

Manifested in mountains and hidden within clouds,

Familiar to rhizomes and young knees.

Air and Water, faithful channels of change,

Whose currents and cycles nudge germination

All the way through to rot and back again.

What's more, there's Fire, dazzling and improbable,

Not only in the cores of planets and stars

But also in the hollow where belief begins.

EPILOGUE: THE CHALICE OF OUR HEARTS

Our search for kindling takes us far beyond ourselves –

There we gather Truth and Mystery.

We return in joy to tend the chalice of our hearts.

A NOTE ON TODAY'S MUSIC

Kindling: Small Reflections on a Limitless Faith is an ecstatic and introspective choral cantata by Unitarian Universalist composer and poet Elizabeth Alexander.

Alexander grew up in the Carolinas and Appalachian Ohio, the daughter of a piano teacher and a minister/prison warden. The music, stories, and challenging questions that filled her childhood are reflected in her broad catalogue of spiritual songs and choral pieces, which have been performed by thousands of ensembles worldwide. Her works have become staples of the repertoire at Arlington Street Church. Alexander now lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota and Unitarian Universalism is proud to boast that she is one of our own.

Kindling was commissioned by the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston. Today's is only the second performance of the work in its entirety.

The cantata is scored for choir, strings, flute, piano, and horn, and is structured in six movements (plus a prologue and epilogue), each inspired by one of the Six Sources of Unitarian Universalism. Taking each source as a jumping off point, Alexander has both written original poetry and composed complimentary new music. As you read the lyrics, note that the italicized texts represent the Six Sources of Unitarian Universalism. The movement titles, and the poetry, are Alexander's own words.

Rather than a mere set of isolated reflections, the sprawling, yet cohesive, 25-minute work casts a wide arc. Alexander takes our hearts and minds on a pilgrimage from astonishment, joy, and wonder, to reverence, radiance, truth, and mystery. Throughout, there is a search and a longing for what truly ignites our hearts and puts us in contact with the divine. No matter where we come from or what we believe, our search for spiritual kindling takes us far beyond ourselves.

We offer today's Easter performance in that same spirit of wonder, joy, and gratitude.

- *Mark David Buckles*